

NOVEMBER 11, 1978

JEAN MONNET AT NINETY

ANNCR: JEAN MONNET, THE FRENCH STATESMAN WIDELY CREDITED AS THE FATHER OF THE NOTION OF A MODERN UNITED EUROPE HAS JUST CELEBRATED HIS NINETIETH BIRTHDAY. V.O.A.'S JOHN BUE REPORTING FROM PARIS, EXAMINES MISTER MONNET'S LONG CAREER.

VOICE: FOR THOSE WHO MEET JEAN MONNET IN FULL ACTIVITY, THE IMAGE IS THAT OF A STOCKY, ROUND-FACED FRENCHMAN WITH, AS HIS PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTIC, A STEELY DETERMINATION IN PURSUING THE GOAL HE DEEPLY BELIEVES IN--THAT OF THE UNITED STATES OF EUROPE. "I AM NOT AN OPTIMIST," HE LIKES TO SAY, "I AM SIMPLY PERSISTENT. HE IS NOT THE EUROPE OF CHARLEMAGNE OR NAPOLEON, OR IN MORE RECENT AND HIDEOUS MEMORY, THAT OF HITLER. IT IS NOT A HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE NOR A TOTALITARIAN FOLLY, BUT A PROFOUNDLY DEMOCRATIC PROJECT.

JEAN MONNET IS CONVINCED THE BOUNDARIES OF THE OLD CONTINENT NO LONGER CORRESPOND TO MODERN DIMENSIONS LIKE OUR PROVINCES IN THE PAST. HE WROTE IN HIS MEMOIRS PUBLISHED TWO YEARS AGO, "OUR NATIONS TODAY MUST LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER UNDER COMMON RULES AND INSTITUTIONS FREELY ARRIVED AT. THE SOVEREIGN NATIONS OF THE PAST CAN NO LONGER SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF THE PRESENT. THEY CANNOT INSURE THEIR OWN PROGRESS OR CONTROL THEIR OWN FUTURE. THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, "SAYS JEAN MONNET, "IS ONLY A STAGE ON THE WAY TO THE ORGANIZED WORLD OF TOMORROW." WEST GERMANY'S KONRAD ADENAUER, ITALY'S ALCIDE DE GASPERI, BELGIUM'S PAUL-HENRI SPAAK, EACH LAID THEIR STONE ON THE EDIFICE CONCEIVED BY MONNET. IRONICALLY ENOUGH, IT WAS THE LEADER OF HIS OWN COUNTRY, FORMER FRENCH PRESIDENT DE GAULLE WHO ALMOST BROKE THE BACK OF THE SLOW BUT APPARENTLY INEXORABLE MOVES TOWARDS CLOSER UNITY. FRANCE

BLOCKED BRITISH ENTRY INTO THE COMMON MARKET AND LEFT ITS OWN SEAT EMPTY FOR MONTHS IN BRUSSELS BECAUSE OF WHAT IT SAW AS EXCESSIVE SUPRANATIONAL AMBITIONS ON THE PART OF THE COMMON MARKET EXECUTIVES.

BUT SINCE THEN, THE WISE MAN OF EUROPE HAS HAD SEVERAL CAUSES FOR SATISFACTION--THREE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND AT LEAST THREE OTHERS WAITING ON THE THRESHOLD; THE CREATION OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF CHIEFS OF STATE; AND NEXT YEAR, THE ELECTION OF A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BY UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE. ADMITTEDLY, THE PARLIAMENT WILL HAVE ONLY LIMITED POWERS AND A EUROPE STILL COMPOSED OF NATION STATES IS CAUTIOUSLY WORKING TO FORM A CONFEDERATION AT A STILL UNSPECIFIED DATE.

IN FRANCE, BOTH GAULLISTS AND COMMUNISTS ARE RESISTING PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S CAUTIOUS BUT DETERMINED MOVES TOWARD THE CONFEDERATION. BUT A RECENT PUBLIC OPINION POLL SHOWS THAT MORE THAN SIXTY PER CENT OF YOUNG FRENCH PERSONS BETWEEN FIFTEEN AND TWENTY YEARS OF AGE RECKONED THEY WILL BECOME CITIZENS OF A UNITED EUROPE IN COMING DECADES. MAYBE THIS CAN BE SEEN AS A SYMBOLIC NINETIETH BIRTHDAY PRESENT FROM THE VERY YOUNG TO A MAN WHOSE FAITH NEVER WAVERED.

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